

Implementation Team Meeting Notes

July 14, 2005

1. Greetings and Introductions.

The July 14 Implementation Team meeting was chaired by Jim Ruff and facilitated by John Palensky. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management (TMT). Cathy Hlebechuk said Libby is currently at elevation 2457.6, and is releasing 24 Kcfs, full powerhouse capacity. The project reached a maximum elevation of 2458.4 feet on July 9, 0.6 feet from full. We have had unseasonably high rain in the month of June; inflows reached 40 Kcfs. We've had to be at full powerhouse much of the time, and would like to reduce outflow by this weekend or early next week so that we can begin drafting the project toward its August 31 elevation of 2439 feet. Grand Coulee reached elevation 1290 feet on July 10, and is currently at about elevation 1289, with 130 Kcfs outflow. Dworshak reached full pool on June 30 and is currently 7 feet from full, elevation 1593 feet. Outflow was increased to 12 Kcfs this morning, at 43 degrees F., to try to control water temperatures at Lower Granite.

Court-ordered spill continues at the Lower Snake projects and at McNary, said Hlebechuk; all four projects are spilling total river flow above station service, up to the state TDG waiver limits. Spill began June 20 at the Lower Snake projects, and at McNary on July 1. Initially, there was a problem with adult fish passage at Little Goose; we reduced spill to 30% during the day, which seems to have helped the adults find the ladder – on the first day we reduced spill, adult passage increased from about 50 per day to 1,600 fish per day. There is ongoing RSW testing at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor, which means alternating days of spill through the RSW and up to the gas cap.

Hlebechuk touched on the SORs the TMT has received in recent weeks, including the Montana SOR and various SORs covering Dworshak operations in an effort to control Lower Granite tailwater temperatures. We have been using a 24-hour rolling temperature average at Lower Granite as a guide for when to increase Dworshak

outflow, she said; the current temperature is about 67 degrees F. As soon as it reaches 67.5 degrees F., we will increase Dworshak outflow to 14 Kcfs.

We filled Hungry Horse around July 1, and current outflow is just under 5 Kcfs, reported Lori Postlethwaite; the current elevation is 3557.8 feet, 2.2 feet from full.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the water quality exceedence problems that have occurred as a result of the court-ordered spill program, as well as the current Dworshak operation, and the delay in cooling effects at Lower Granite once the cooler water is released from Dworshak. Rock Peters also discussed the ongoing RSW studies at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor, noting that these studies include a comparison of survival and egress behavior under two spill treatments – spill to the gas cap and spill through the RSWs. The Lower Monumental study will be completed by July 15; all other studies will be completed by July 21, at which point Lower Granite and Ice Harbor will revert to the court-ordered spill program. Ruff noted that NMFS' reach survival study is also ongoing in the Lower Snake.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No report.

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). No report.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). No report.

E. TMDL Update. No report.

3. RM&E Issues.

A. Discussion of Snake River Fall Chinook Transport Study Plans. Rock Peters said what the Corps has been trying to do is to address the long-term needs of fall chinook by convening a subgroup to develop study designs and research objectives. The subgroup has met a couple of times, but has not met recently due to scheduling conflicts, Peters said. We have developed what we consider to be the primary management questions and have distributed that list and asked for feedback. We're waiting for that feedback, and are continuing to try to schedule the next subgroup meeting, hopefully on July 25.

One issue is that we are trying to ensure that we're synched up with the AFEP process, but we're falling behind, Peters said. I'm very concerned about timing and synchronization, he said. When would this issue come back to the SRWG and Regional Forum processes? Ruff asked. As soon as possible, Peters replied.

What are the primary questions that came up? Bruce Suzumoto asked. As I recall, the subgroup didn't discuss the questions, replied Kim Fodrea; we primarily discussed the need to collaborate, and less-technical issues. That's correct, said Tony Nigro – one of the tasks for the next meeting is for each subgroup participant to come

with a list of management questions they consider most important. We were also going to talk about who needs to be recruited for the technical groups that would develop those management questions and study designs more fully, he added. We're hoping to develop a multi-year strategy, rather than a single-year strategy, for fall chinook, added Suzanne Cooper.

What's the plan for developing regional consensus on the management questions? John Palensky asked. We're hoping to do that through the Regional Forum process, Cooper replied. Dave Statler said that, to him, it is very important that this process proceed with maximum transparency, and that the subgroup membership and the process for developing the Snake River fall chinook study plans be vetted through the IT. If there's a better way to conduct this process, we're completely open to that, said Peters. We'll put a follow-up on this item on the August IT agenda, said Ruff. It was agreed that Tony Nigro, Rock Peters, and Paul Wagner will be responsible for reporting back on this issue at the August IT meeting.

B. ISAB's Proposed Load Following Study. We have discussed this topic before, said Palensky; the consensus was that the study could not be implemented this year, but that a one-pager was needed so that the study proposal can proceed in 2006. Ruff said NMFS worked with Council staff to develop a draft one-pager to address the ISAB's load following study proposal; that one-pager is now going through the AFEP review process, and it will be prioritized along with all of the other studies for 2006.

Ruff said there are three study objectives: to study flow fluctuation, juvenile behavior, and juvenile survival during periods of both load following and periods of constant flow. The study would begin in 2006 and would continue for as many years as necessary to obtain the desired information. In response to a question, Ruff said behavioral and survival data would be obtained via radio and acoustic tags.

Fodrea clarified that, while the one-pager is being discussed within the AFEP process, once the technical issues are resolved, if a feasible proposal is developed, it will then go through the Council process for BPA funding. Peters added that the Corps has begun the RFP process for this study. Fodrea said that, if the study concludes that a no load-following operation is warranted, that will raise some very difficult policy questions, particularly for the Snake River projects. Suzumoto added that, given the fact that the Council is finalizing the FY'06 budget as we speak, and the fact that Council staff is in the process of developing a research plan, it is likely that the load following study would not be able to begin until 2007, rather than 2006.

With respect to where the discussions of the broader policy questions associated with the load following study would take place, Cooper said that, from Bonneville's perspective, it makes sense that they would occur at the Council, rather than the Regional Forum, because of the Council's power planning responsibilities. Ruff noted that, as the oversight entities for the ISAB, NMFS, the Council and CRITFC will need to provide a letter of response to the ISAB.

C. Passage Model Development Update. Ruff said he had placed this on the agenda because in NMFS' last consultation, on the 2004 BiOp, several people commented that the SIMPAS model was too simplistic. They were also critical of using SIMPAS as an analytical tool, he said. We began discussing some of the SIMPAS model's limitations with NMFS Science Center staff, he said; one area of concern has to do with how the model analyzes reservoir survival. There are different ways to handle that; we asked the Science Center to review the flow/survival relationship SIMPAS uses. The Science Center said that, while they couldn't conduct that review in the time-frame needed for consultation, they were very interested in doing that review, Ruff said.

There are a number of other potential improvements that have been suggested, he said; after going through the litigation for the BiOp, NMFS is interested in improving our analytical tool for fish passage. We would like to work collaboratively with the region to develop a new tool to analyze juvenile fish survival through the FCRPS. We would like to get regional support and buy-in during the development of the model, he said; we are interested in your ideas and concepts. If we are successful in this effort, we would also have it peer-reviewed, said Ruff.

Do you have a time-frame in mind? Peters asked. Is this a near-term effort, or a longer-term effort? That depends on the degree of collaboration, Ruff replied; we'll need to convene a group to help develop a work plan. The actual programming will be done by programmers with the Science Center. We will need to have an analytical tool developed by this fall, to be available if and when the BiOp is remanded, Ruff said; if we don't have a new model at that point, we'll continue to use SIMPAS.

Bill Tweit said Washington supports the concept of making the model and its development process as open and collaborative as possible. I'll have to give serious thought to how we can free up the staff resources needed to contribute effectively to the process, he said, but I think the approach NMFS has put forward makes a lot of sense.

Basically, I wanted to get the idea of developing a new passage model on the table, and to get a commitment from each of you that you are willing to work together with NMFS on this effort, said Ruff. I'm doing this at IT because you're at the management level, and can assign the right people to provide technical input. I think this is a real opportunity to do something positive for the region, said Suzumoto, to develop a passage model we can all agree on, regionally. If you do this right, it's a real opportunity to resolve many of the issues that occur again and again. If the inputs and assumptions that drive the model are transparent, I think that's a great opportunity, he said.

It may make sense to look at this in two phases, said Cooper – what can we do on a triage basis in the near-term, and where do we want to go, in developing a completely new model. That's one of the issues I would encourage the work plan subgroup to address, she said.

You also need to look not only at the information that is available, but at the goals, observed Earl Weber. I also think that this is likely to be an iterative effort, because it's going to be a pretty involved process, with a lot of hands-on work involved. I agree, said Howard Schaller – before we can commit staff and resources, we'll need to identify the goals we're trying to achieve, and what management questions we're trying to answer. Second, he said, you're trying to develop a model that incorporates alternative hypotheses in terms of what happens within a reservoir. There are also alternative hypotheses about delayed mortality, Schaller said. This doesn't necessarily mean that this model will be able to resolve these large questions and competing hypotheses. It means that the outputs will be multiple, and will likely evaluate the weight of evidence for each hypothesis. I think this is a very positive step for the region, particularly if it is truly done in a collaborative way, but I don't think it's going to make the competing hypotheses go away – in fact, it will likely highlight them, said Schaller.

I agree that the model we envision will highlight where the key uncertainties are in the data, and where we need to focus our research efforts in the future, said Ruff. In that sense, I think what you envision could be a great strategic discussion tool, said Suzumoto.

In terms of what is needed now, Ruff asked the other IT participants to designate a technical representative who could participate on the technical work plan development subgroup by July 22. Tony Nigro said Ron Boyce will be Oregon's technical contact.

The group then devoted a few minutes of discussion to the question of how best to begin this task, including the need for a clearer understanding of the goals of the project, the time steps involved, and whether the management goals and questions the model would be designed to address should be developed at the technical or the policy level. Ultimately, it was agreed that NMFS will develop a written description of its concepts for this model, and for its development process, and will distribute this memo to IT members by the August IT meeting. A work plan for the next six months, and the level of effort you're expecting from the others at this table, would also be helpful, said Jim Litchfield. Basically, what I wanted to do today was to gauge the interest of the other IT participants in developing this model collaboratively, said Ruff.

4. Planning/Decision Making Issues.

A. Libby and Hungry Horse Operations – SOR MT-1. Jim Litchfield said two conflicting SORs – the Montana SOR and the CRITFC/USFWS SOR – have been submitted to the TMT regarding summer operations at Libby and Hungry Horse. As a result, there are a lot of policy-level discussions happening outside this room. He said he had received a call from the Montana Council members this morning asking for another week for those outside discussions to play out. There isn't much we can do on this issue today, and at least for the next few days, because Libby needs to continue to

release full powerhouse capacity due to high inflows – in other words, no change in operations is possible at the moment. Litchfield suggested that the TMT be allowed to revisit this issue at next week's conference call; if TMT is unable to reach consensus, we can convene an IT call. It was so agreed.

Hlebechuk noted that the current plan is to reduce Libby outflow to 17 Kcfs as soon as the danger of fill-and-spill has passed; the project will then need to release about 12 Kcfs between now and the end of August to reach elevation 2439 by August 31. We'll reserve a conference line for next Thursday, in case IT resolution is needed, said Ruff. It was agreed that, if needed, the call will begin at 9:30 am Thursday, July 21.

5. Regional Forum Process Issues.

A. Long-Term Planning. Palensky drew the group's attention to the "Regional Forum Implementation Team Issue Tracking and Schedule" handout attached to today's agenda. He reminded the group of their ongoing commitment to develop a long-term workplan for addressing upcoming issues, and said that this issue tracking document is intended to keep the IT informed about the status of the issues it is working on, including Libby and Hungry Horse operations and the ISAB load following study. It includes, all of the ongoing issues we're currently addressing, said Palensky; however, it is unlikely that this list is complete. The packet also includes an IT meeting schedule and agenda items for each meeting, he said. Palensky asked the group for any comments or suggestions they may have on these documents.

What I wanted to talk about today is any additional items that need to be on this list, said Palensky, as well as the timeline in which they need to be addressed. Schaller suggested that Palensky add a "resolution/product" column to the worksheet. Palensky replied that he has already developed a draft "Regional Forum Individual Issue Workplan" form for each issue the IT takes on; it is included in today's packet.

One missing issue is winter flow operations related to chum and the Hanford Reach, suggested Schaller. Another issue is Spring Creek spill/reprogramming, an issue that is being discussed among the US v. Oregon parties, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Corps and Bonneville, said Schaller. Schaller described the discussions that have already taken place surrounding this item; Ruff asked what Schaller hopes the IT would bring to those discussions. I would hope that the IT would be willing to support reprogramming, Schaller replied, adding that a reprogramming proposal is available.

Doesn't this tie in with the first issue you mentioned, winter flow operations? Ruff asked. Yes, Schaller replied. One of the items on the issue list is the annual review and approval of the Water Management Plan, said Ruff – I think the issues you mentioned would be covered under the fall/winter update to the WMP, for which we would be asked to resolve any issues the TMT cannot resolve. My concern is that we don't want

to duplicate items the TMT is already working on, he said. Harkless noted that the TMT is scheduled to begin development of the 2006 Water Management Plan in September. Palensky noted that it was not his intent that the IT be the group that takes on every issue on the list – there are certain issues that would more likely be addressed at TMT or WQT.

Basically, the intent of this list is to be proactive, observed Fodrea – to anticipate upcoming issues and attempt to resolve them in advance of their becoming critical. And the Spring Creek Hatchery issue has a variety of implications for other system operations, Schaller observed – it's an issue that has been repeatedly raised to the IT in years past, and given the fact that the Fish and Wildlife Service will be requesting spill in support of the Spring Creek hatchery releases in 2006. In response to a question from Palensky, Schaller said "reprogramming" refers to a proposal to reprogram those hatchery releases to eliminate the need for March spill. Given that spill will be requested in 2006, I think this is an appropriate issue for IT consideration, Suzumoto observed.

What do you want the IT to do with this issue? Cooper asked. We want to ensure that it continues to be on the IT table, Schaller replied – this is really the only entity in the region that brings all of the major players – the states, tribes, federal agencies and the Council – to the table. In order to do the reprogramming, we're going to have to get approval at many levels. The IT is the only entity that can legitimize the fact that reprogramming is important, and doing so would provide significant improvements in system flexibility. Palensky said he will put the reprogramming issue on the August IT agenda.

Other issues? said Palensky. One issue that occurs to me is our continued discussion of summer RSW operations, said Tweit. That's on the list, said Ruff – it's tied into the framework for fall chinook research issue. The issue, to me, is what we do in the interim, said Tweit – should we continue to operate the RSWs during the summer, even before we have results from the fall chinook study? Should the RSWs be operated to provide equivalent survival, or improved survival? Installation criteria for RSWs is a completely different issue, he added.

Other issues identified at today's meeting include:

- pinnipeds
- system flood control study
- kelts
- lamprey
- the need for a 2006 Implementation Plan update

Ruff said he and Palensky will update and flesh out the issue tracking and scheduling documents to reflect today's discussion, and will email out the revised draft prior to the August 4 IT meeting. There was general agreement that this approach, and these draft documents, will be useful in informing the IT's future discussions.

B. Update on June 22 Meeting of Tribal Leaders and Federal Executives.

Palensky said this topic was discussed in the context of the IT's discussion of re-energizing the Executive Committee. He said his understanding was that this topic did not arise at the June 22 meeting. The tribal leaders and federal executives are meeting again today, he said; if it comes up at today's meeting, I will provide a further update at the August IT meeting.

6. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for August 4. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.